

# Slovakia

## in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century



# Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- The Slovaks lands were part of the Kingdom of Hungary since 10<sup>th</sup> Century
- Austro-Hungarian Empire
- Triple Alliance (WW1)



# Czechoslovakia

- October 28, 1918 – Independence
- Incorporated into the new Czechoslovakia
  - Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia, Ruthenia
  - Treaty of Saint Germain, Treaty of Trianon



- Parliamentary democracy
  - President Tomáš G. Masaryk

# Interwar Czechoslovakia

- Development
  - Political and economic stability and growth
- Joined League of Nations
- Leading industrial-agrarian country
  - Inherited industrial base (Czech) from Austria
  - Among the 10 richest countries in the world
- Hit hard by economic crisis in 1930s and began decline

# Growing discord in the 1930s

- Differences between Czechs and Slovaks
  - Cultural, linguistic, religious
- Dissatisfaction between perceived inequalities
- Emergence of nationalist movement in Slovakia
  - Andrej Hlinka, Jozef Tiso – Slovak People's Party
  - Called for greater equality for Slovaks, autonomy

# Beginning of WW2

- 1938 – Czechoslovakia was forced to cede the Sudetenland to Hitler's Germany
- Afraid of German forces and a weakened federal government
- Slovakia withdrew from the federation and declared independence

# Jozef Tiso and wartime Slovakia

- Jozef Tiso
- Heavy German, fascist influence
  - policies aligned with Nazis
- Entered WW2 as Germany's ally
- Holocaust in Slovakia
  - 1942-1944 – approx. 70,000 Slovak Jews, Roma, and others sent to camps

# Slovak National Uprising

- Popular support for Tiso's regime waned toward the end of the war
- Armed insurrection
- Banská Bystrica – 1944
  - Began waging a guerilla war against Tiso and military that continued until Soviet Army arrived in 1945



# End of WW2

- 1945 – WW2 ended
  - Tiso ousted, executed in 1947
- Reunited with the Czech lands
  - Czechoslovak Republic
- Ruled by a coalition government that included Communist party members in high positions
  - Communist party amassed popular support progressively through 1948

# The early Communist era

- February 1948 – Communists definitively took over the government in Prague
- Economy and government modeled after the socialist policies of the Soviet Union and fell under Soviet influence
  - Nationalization of private property
  - Centralized economy
  - Collectivization of farms
  - State control of factories and businesses
  - Total control of Communist Party

# Reform

- 1960s – Movement to reform Communism
  - Party leaders and intellectuals
  - Slovak Alexander Dubček
    - Became head of the Communist Party in 1968
- "Socialism with a Human Face"
  - Lifted censorship and called for liberalization of socialist policies

# Prague Spring Uprising

- August 21, 1968 – USSR did not approve of reforms, did not want liberalization to spread
- USSR and Warsaw pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia and put down the uprising
  - E. Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary
- Uprising was short-lived

# After Prague Spring

- Gustáv Husák (Slovak) replaced Dubček in April 1969
- Program of “normalization” was initiated to return to pre-reform policies
  - Censorship was reimposed
  - Purged reform-oriented leaders of government and social organizations
- Federalization
  - Czech Republic and Slovak Republic

# Velvet Revolution

- 1989 – Communism collapsed across Central/Eastern Europe
- Dissent from both Czech and Slovak Republics
  - Civic Forum (Czech)
  - Public Against Violence (Slovakia)
- November 17, 1989 – “Velvet Revolution”
- First Communist regime in Central/Eastern Europe to vote for new democratic leadership
- Returned to parliamentary democracy, led by President Václav Havel

# 1990-1993

- Less control, less centralization
- Inequalities
  - Czech Republic had 20% higher GDP
  - Seat of government in Prague
  - Cultural, linguistic differences
- Slight majority of Slovak politicians advocated sovereignty
  - Economic, political advantages

# The Velvet Divorce

- July 17, 1992 – Slovak Parliament declared independence from the Czechoslovak Federation
- Full dissolution was negotiated and went into effect on December 31, 1992
- 37% of Slovaks, 36% of Czechs supported the division
- “Velvet” Divorce
  - Like the “Velvet” Revolution, it was negotiated and non-violent



# Consequences of Separation

- Federal assets divided 2:1 (population ratio)
  - Many property disputes lasted for years
- Slovakia adopted new currency (Slovak koruna)
  - Both economies suffered initially, then stabilized
- Dual citizenship not initially allowed
  - Both constitutions later amended
- Positive relations maintained
- No attempts at reunification

# The 1990s

- Vladimir Mečiar, Prime Minister 1992-1998
  - HZDS (Movement for Democratic Slovakia)
- Semi-authoritarian state
  - Rule of law inhibited
  - Democratic practices abandoned
  - Liberalization proceeded slowly
  - Corruption among high-ranking officials

# Reform

- 1998 – Mikuláš Dzurinda led coalition of 5 opposition parties to replace Mečiar as Prime Minister
- Economic reform and growth
  - Attracted foreign investors
- Began processes of integration and international cooperation
  - EU, NATO, OECD

# Slovakia Today

- Member of European Union and NATO (2004)
- Schengen area country (2007)
- Use EURO currency (2009)
- Fastest growth rate in EU
- Popular tourist destination



- This presentation was developed for the Center for Slavic and East European Studies at The Ohio State University by Shannon Potter.